

# Kuwait

13–21 April 2015

## Participants

Thierry Jansen  
Denis O’Sullivan  
David Pearce  
Martin Polley  
David Ramsden  
John Ramsden  
David Wadding



**Plain Leaf-warbler**

**Led by** Nigel Warren

**Day 1** Overnight flight from London Heathrow via Doha to Kuwait City.

**Day 2** After arriving at the airport and picking up our second vehicle we drove to our hotel in Kuwait City, arriving around lunchtime, dropped our bags and met up with Thierry who had arrived the previous day. We then headed off to Jahra Pools Reserve for our first of several visits there. A Rufous Bush-robin was the first of many to be seen during our trip, along with a good selection of herons, raptors and waders with the highlight being a pair of Red-wattled Lapwings. The only wildfowl was a group of 10 Ferruginous Ducks. Plenty of European and Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, Collared Pratincoles, both Red-tailed (Daurian) and Isabelline (Turkestan) Shrikes, also Red-backed and Woodchat Shrikes, in fact the whole week would be good for six species of shrike. Next stop was the oddly named Manchester Club Bay mainly to see if there were any Crab Plovers there. Unfortunately there wasn’t but there were plenty of other waders including about 20 Terek Sandpipers.

**Day 3** We headed off northwest to Al Abraç, one of the best birding spots in Kuwait, for migrants and hopefully Shikra. Two White-throated Robins, one each of Eastern Olivaceous and Eastern Orphean Warbler and a Cinereous Bunting were amongst a good selection of warblers and chats. In a small reedy pool we saw four Basra Reed-warblers and a flyover European Roller. Several Eurasian Sparrowhawks were seen, but no Shikra. Mega news, we had a call to say there was a Plain Leaf-warbler about an hour away so we headed off to Mutla’a Ranch. On arrival there were a few local birders there staking out a dripping water pipe and after a nervous wait it appeared for the entire group to see. Thanks to Marcus Craig for finding a first for Kuwait and second record for the Western Palearctic. A Chestnut-shouldered Petronia also put in an appearance while we were waiting along with a Hume’s Whitethroat (like a small Orphean Warbler) and a smaller *halimodendri* Lesser Whitethroat.

**Day 4** Called in again at Mutla’a Ranch on our way north but didn’t see the Plain Leaf-warbler probably due to quite windy conditions, but three Tree Pipits, an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and two Masked Shrikes were seen. Stopped off outside a Bottling Plant and saw two Eurasian Wrynecks briefly and a European Nightjar gave several flight views. It was then onto Abdaly Farms where we connected with at least four

Afghan Babblers giving prolonged views and three Hypocolius. Our next stop was to view over Subiya Island where we counted 20, somewhat distant, Crab Plovers, along with 18 Western Reef-herons and a couple of Great Crested Terns. On route back to Kuwait City we stopped at Jahra Farms to see the resident Bank Mynas that breed in an old well and then did a short seawatch from the Sultan Centre where there were a few Little Terns feeding just offshore and a little farther out an Arctic Skua was chasing the Lesser Crested and Sandwich Terns.

**Day 5** First stop was Green Island, which a couple of the group decided wasn't green, or an island, but good for migrants and the only place to see Red-vented Bulbuls. Just outside the entrance we saw three flyover European Rollers and then inside the grounds were the usual assortment of various Yellow Wagtails along with Red-throated Pipits, a couple of Eurasian Wrynecks, a single Hypocolius, two Red-vented Bulbuls and three (not yet tickable) Rüppell's Weavers. The Pivot Fields were our next stop. As there is no access anymore we viewed from outside the fence but still had good views of all four harrier species, 38 Lesser Kestrels and three Lesser Grey Shrikes. We then moved onto Jahra East Outfall and scanning the waders along the shoreline picked out 16 Lesser Sandpipers. A Heuglin's Gull was amongst a few Caspian Gulls and we flushed a couple of Common Quails. Two Red-necked Phalaropes were with a party of Little Stints on the muddy pools in the reedbeds. Next we visited Jahra Farms again finding mainly Yellow Wagtails, more Bank Myna's and a Dead Sea Sparrow, which was unfortunately only seen by a couple of the group.

**Day 6** Started the day at Jahra Pools and our first stop produced a very smart Baillon's Crake and shortly afterwards a Spotted Crake sauntered out of the reeds. Two Greater Spotted Eagles drifted overhead while we watched another good selection of waders including 30 Red-necked Phalaropes, a Marsh Sandpiper and two White-tailed Lapwings. Two Purple Herons and a Whiskered Tern were new for the trip as were three Namaqua Doves and as we looked out into the bay a Socotra Cormorant gave ridiculously close views as it flew within 10 metres of us. Doha Spit was next on the list, a great spot for waders to roost over the high tide and we weren't disappointed, about 500 Lesser Sandpipers, at least four Greater Sandpipers, around 200 Broad-billed and many Terek Sandpipers were the most notable. Dennis wandered off down the beach and counted 24 Caspian and two Gull-billed Terns along with six Heuglin's Gulls. Last stop of the day was Sulabikhat Nature Reserve where we had really close views of an obliging Upcher's Warbler in a scrubby area giving good photo opportunities as did two Great Reed-warblers and a Barred Warbler as they came to a watering hole.

**Day 7** With just two days to go, finding new birds was becoming more difficult as we retraced our steps to Al Abra, Mutla'a Ranch and Jahra Pools. At Al Abra we counted eight Hypocolius, but still no Shikra. Mutla'a Ranch produced a Eurasian Hobby but no Pale Leaf-warbler (although it was seen that day) and at Jahra Pools the Red-necked Phalaropes had increased to 44. In desperation we visited the University Grounds for House Crow!!

**Day 8** Our last day and first stop was back to Sulabikhat Nature Reserve where the Upcher's, two Great Reeds and Barred Warblers were still giving photo opportunities and this time joined by a Red-backed Shrike. It was then south to Fahaheel and Port Zour for high tide. At Fahaheel we watched from a shopping centre, so very civilised with coffee and ice cream along with four Socotra Cormorants and two White-cheeked Terns, then into the port where we watched 17 Bridled Terns offshore, a couple more Socotra Cormorants, Lesser and Great Crested, White-cheeked and Little Terns. On land we found a very showy Corncrake, a Eurasian Wryneck, eight Pale Rockfinches and a Black-headed Bunting, all in all a successful trip.

**Day 9** An early morning transfer back to the airport followed by a flight back to London at the end of the tour.

**Nigel Warren, Birdfinders**